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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [ELAB](#) [IS](#) [JO](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: KING AND SENIOR OFFICIALS GREET
JORDANIAN-SPONSORED STAFFDEL

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale, Reasons 1.4 (B) & (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: The King and senior GOJ officials told a Jordanian-sponsored staffdel that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was the core issue in the Middle East. They described the burden large numbers of Iraqis impose on Jordan. The Minister of Labor explained the GOJ's plan to address reports of labor abuses at QIZs. End summary.

¶2. (U) Fourteen Senate staffers, sponsored by the Jordanian Embassy in Washington, visited Jordan March 30) April 7. They met with senior government officials, civil society activists and cultural leaders. Highlights of their exchanges follow.

King Abdullah and Peace Efforts

¶3. (C) King Abdullah received the staffers (accompanied by Ambassador) at his personal residence ("Beit al-Urdun"), and stressed his belief that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the core issue facing Jordan and the region. The best means to bolster moderates to counter the growing Iranian threat, gain regional support in stabilizing Iraq and to isolate Syria was through progress toward a two-state solution. While he acknowledged that the situation in Iraq had significant domestic implications in the U.S., the King cautioned that an early withdrawal would further destabilize Iraq and the region. Patience was needed because political reconciliation in Iraq was "on a slow boil." Meanwhile, the U.S. and Arab moderates needed to focus on the Palestinian issue, in order to turn the tables on the region's extremists, led by Iran, which capitalized on the Palestinians, plight.

¶4. (C) King Abdullah expected the Palestinian national unity government to collapse within months, citing fundamental ideological difference between Fatah and Hamas. However, Abu Mazen could negotiate with Israel as the elected leader of the Palestinian people. In a separate meeting, the King's Office Director Basem Awadallah told the staffdel that a key decision point would come when Abu Mazen has to take his plans (including negotiations with Israel) to the Palestinian people for a plebiscite. We need to ensure that Fatah continues to reform itself and prepare the people to accept peace and reject Hamas, said Awadallah.

¶5. (C) The King cited increased public discussion of the Arab Initiative, compared to when it was first issued in ¶2002. Moderate Arab states are ready for dialogue with Israel. The possibility for Israel of full integration with the Arab world is an "amazing prize." He predicted that a stronger push towards restarting the peace process in the near future would allow Arabs and Muslims to sit with Israelis. A photo of Arabs and Israelis shaking hands under American sponsorship would be powerful.

Iraqis in Jordan a Burden

¶16. (C) Every GOJ official with whom it met told the staffdel that the large numbers of Iraqis Jordan hosts was a burden, and they appealed for additional assistance to deal with it. Government Spokesman Nasser Joudeh described the soon-to-be-conducted survey of Iraqis living in Jordan by FAFO, a Norwegian NGO. The GOJ believed there were approximately 700,000 Iraqis in Jordan. Joudeh said they ranged from landowners and professionals, to laborers and asylum seekers. The asylum seekers were a minority, he contended, and UNHCR had classified only 900 individually as refugees. Iraqis are welcome in Jordan, said Joudeh, but so is assistance.

Addressing Labor Issues at QIZ's

¶17. (SBU) Minister of Labor Basem al-Salem told the staffdel that the GOJ took very seriously the report on labor conditions in QIZs which the National Labor Committee (NLC), a New York-based NGO, published in May, 2006. With support from USAID and technical assistance from the ILO, the MOL was able to improve its factory inspection regime and double the number of inspectors. He highlighted the USAID-sponsored short-term labor assessment conducted by an independent specialized organization that was recently posted on the MOL's website, along with the GoJ's action plan to address remaining issues. The Minister of Labor accompanied the group on a tour of two factories in the Al-Tajamouat QIZ. Staffer Gabriel Adler questioned the positive impact of QIZs to the Jordanian economy in light of the large foreign work force. Adler remained behind and spent time at another factory, conversed with workers, and observed dormitory and

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bathroom conditions.

¶18. (U) Staffdel members were:

- 1 - DAVID BONINE) Senior Legislative Assistant for Senator Robert Byrd
- 2 - RACHELLE JOHNSON - Senior Legislative Assistant for Senator Thad Cochran
- 3 - JACKIE COTTRELL - Chief of Staff for Senator Pat Roberts
- 4 - JOSH CARTER - Legislative Assistant for Senator Sam Brownback
- 5 - PETER FISCHER - Chief of Staff for Senator Michael Crapo
- 6 - JENNIFER MIES - Chief of Staff for Senator Norm Coleman
- 7 - SHAWN WHITMAN - Chief of Staff for Senator Crag Thomas
- 8 - CLARINE NARDI RIDDLE - Chief of Staff for Senator Joseph Lieberman
- 9 - GEORGE LOWE - Chief of Staff for Senator Ted Stevens
- 10 - BRIAN KLIPPENSTEIN - Chief of Staff for Senator Christopher Bond
- 11 - ALOYSIUS HOGAN - Legislative Director for Senator James Inhofe
- 12 - GABRIEL ADLER) Senior Policy Analyst for Senator Byron Dorgan
- 13 - ALAN HANSON - Legislative Director for Senator Jeff Sessions
- 14 - KATHERINE ENGLISH - Legal Counsel for the Environmental and Public Works Committee

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